

**A Free School Which Challenges the  
Adult Blind**

*By William A. Hadley*

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**



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**N**O CHARGE is made for instructions. The books are loaned free of cost. In cases where the pupil has resources and is willing to do so, he is allowed to make a contribution. However, the earning power of the blind is so very small that it was considered wise to make no charge. When the work was in its infancy friends of the school said that if the plan would work and it could be proved that it would meet a real need, financial support should be forthcoming. Thus far philanthropic friends have been generous in providing an annual budget to maintain the work, and hope is cherished that support will come from ever-widening circles.

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# A Free School Which Challenges the Adult Blind

BY WILLIAM A. HADLEY

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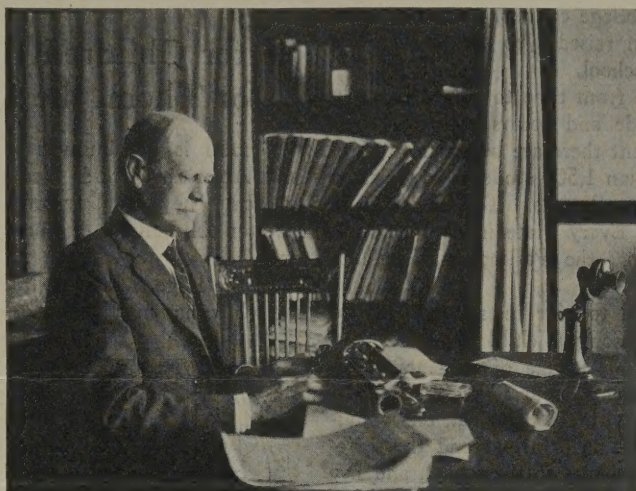
THE establishment of the Hadley Correspondence School for the Blind is so intimately connected with my own life and experience that it is necessary to include some personal history. My entire life had been spent in the school-room, either as pupil or teacher, up to the time my sight failed. I was then for some years not only sightless but without any sort of employment. No one seemed to know of any form of occupation to which I could turn, though I lived in a community which is by no means backward or lacking in intelligence or enterprise. For five years I did what tutoring opportunity offered, read some books in raised type, but most of all longed for some form of steady employment. I did not at that time realize that the experience then was to become an asset in later years, for it taught me what every adult who loses his sight must pass through in order to find himself in the attempt.

The suggestion of a passing guest led me to think of offering instruction to the blind by correspondence. The greater portion of a year was spent in becoming acquainted with the resources which were available, and learning what efforts were made to provide such instruction for the blind. I found that the children are all well cared for, either in the institutions under the management of the State, or in parochial schools, or in classes in the public schools. I found that in some States there were home teachers who sought out the adult blind and gave them instruction in reading raised type and in some form of hand work. In a few cities shops were maintained where blind people could come and work under direction and receive compensation for their products. In such cities, where

the blind can be brought together, either in a shop or in some social way, much of the isolation which they feel is overcome. The blind men and women in the small towns or in the rural districts suffer most, and it is to this group principally that a course in some line of study offers contact with the outside world.

When the Chautauqua movement was begun it revealed the fact that there were hundreds of people who were eager to improve themselves by taking the courses offered; and the success of this movement opened the way for correspondence schools for the sighted. It seemed logical that the adult blind, upon whose hands time often hung heavily, would welcome an opportunity to do some academic work under proper direction. An experiment conducted with a pupil was so successful that it convinced me the scheme was practical. I assumed that there were many who would be glad to take such work and, in fact, my own experience made me sure that this was the case. The sighted friends of the adult blind are helpful in the way of providing for the physical needs, but too often they lack knowledge of what resources are available for mental stimulation or spiritual uplift. Too often words of pity are given the blind when the most urgent need is opportunity. The blind man needs to realize that a handicap is a challenge, not a defeat, and that character is of more value than any of his senses.

The school was incorporated, not for profit, under the laws of the State of Illinois, in January, 1922. A board of trustees was formed and organization completed. Suitable rooms for offices were secured, requisite furniture and machinery installed,



William A. Hadley in his office using the Braille writer

FINDING news in the admission of a blind man to an exclusive \$200,000 club, composed of agents of a great life insurance company, the *New York Times* recently told his story. It was a story of self-education through the aid of the Braille books available to the blind and particularly gave credit to the assistance of the Hadley Correspondence School for the Blind at Winnetka, Ill. To the aid he had received from the school this successful insurance man attributed his ability to earn from the beginning a very fine salary and to increase his earning capacity until he was selling annually insurance which brought him a return of \$200,000.

This New York man is a beneficiary of the struggle to help others made by Mr. Hadley through seven years of blindness and which resulted in his starting the correspondence school. He was born on a farm in Indiana and eventually went to college at Richmond in that State, graduating in 1881. While teaching school he attended the University of Minnesota and finally took his A. M. Then he spent two years in Berlin, Germany, and on his return devoting some time as a Latin teacher in a college in Ohio.

In 1900 Mr. Hadley went to Chicago and continued teaching in the high schools there until his sight failed. His work in Chicago was in fact a preparation for the organization of his school for the blind, for his teaching was primarily of commercial subjects. During a period of enforced idleness he eventually met a friend who suggested the idea of a free school for the blind. In his work as principal Mrs. Hadley has been his comrade and "right hand" through all the years; and today the school has the support of a group of philanthropists so that its services are available at no cost to blind persons who are ambitious to take their place in the world of business.

Mr. Hadley's own story of the establishment of his school and its work will be of deep interest particularly to the Red Cross volunteers who are doing such a splendid work in the transcribing of Braille books for the sightless.



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Announcements of the school's opening and its plans were made in various magazines reaching blind readers, and at once pupils applied for courses they wished to study. The prospective pupil wrote specifying the course, and the text was sent to him in Braille with instructions for studying and doing the written work required. These written reports were read with care, and returned with the necessary comments and criticism and suggestions. After a course is satisfactorily completed, a certificate is given the student.

**A**T the present time the school offers about 30 courses in different subjects, beginning with a primer for those unable to read Braille, and including grammar-school and high-school studies, and some college courses. Through provision of Federal law, books in raised type are carried free to the student and back to the school.

The number of pupils varies from time to time; for daily some new enrollments are made and others complete their courses and drop out. At present there are between 400 and 500 students at work. More than 1,500 students have passed through the school record of enrollments. The students are distributed over a wide area. Every State in the Union is represented, and Canada, China, the Philippines, England, and Scotland are included.

It is the policy of the school to give instruction only to adults, unless for some good reason the child enrolled is unable to attend a State school. The age of students varies

life insurance department, a number of students who have completed the work have become associated with an insurance company, and they are doing well financially.

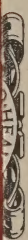
It is the opinion of workers for the blind as well as teachers that two things are necessary for the blind person who would succeed in finding a place in society and in winning the respect of others as well as of himself. These are education and work. Education to increase the intellectual ability and to provide resources for hours of solitude as well as an ever-increasing interest in the affairs of home, State, and church; work to give employment to hand and mind and to secure the happiness which comes from being of service to others. We hope we are doing our part in this educational program.



## Better Children; a Better Nation for Them, the Keynote of May Day

**T**HIS is big business in which we are engaged," the American Child Health Association declares, in announcing the May Day program, whose keynote this year is: "Better children for our nation; a better nation for our children."

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In the large, May Day has become a means of permeating the whole nation with higher standards of health for children, and the hope of wholeness. Specifically, it is helping to build machinery which reinforces these standards and fulfills this hope. Every State last year had a May Day organization. In 35 that organization centered in the State boards of health, which means that there was official motive power back of this "poetic impulse."

The machinery which has developed is taking on permanence. In a number of States and communities

May Day committees are continuously active throughout the year, May Day serving as a point of initiation and climax. National organizations have in several instances used May Day as a pivot about which they build campaigns looking towards the end of the freer and happier childhood.

So strong has its endorsement of May Day become that at its convention in Los Angeles in October, 1927, the executive council passed a resolution to urge Congress to set aside May 1 as official child health day. The health officers of the country recently, through their executive committee, endorsed May Day as part of their official year-round program.

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